

JUNE 1995

*Field Naturalists
Club of Ballarat*
Incorporated

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting June 2 Mr P Previtt: Small Mammals and Platypus

Meeting July 7 Mr A Dyson: Astronomy Night

**Excursion June 4 Ballarat Wildlife Park: Mrs S Davison
(Childrens Excursion - Half Day)**

**Excursion July 9 University of Ballarat Arboretum:
Mr J Gregurke (Half Day Excursion)**



President: Mr J Gregurke
Secretary: Mr L Fink
Treasurer: Mr G Binns
Editor: Mr A Dyson

PO Box 328W, Ballarat West 3350

MEETINGS are held at the School of
Mines & Industries, Art Building,
Lydiard St. Sth., 7.30 pm.
EXCURSIONS start at "Book City",
cnr. Sturt and Armstrong Sts. 9.30 am.
(full day outings) or 1.30 pm (half day)

DIARY DATES

Wednesday June 28: 7.30pm. Committee Meeting at Florence
Williamson's,

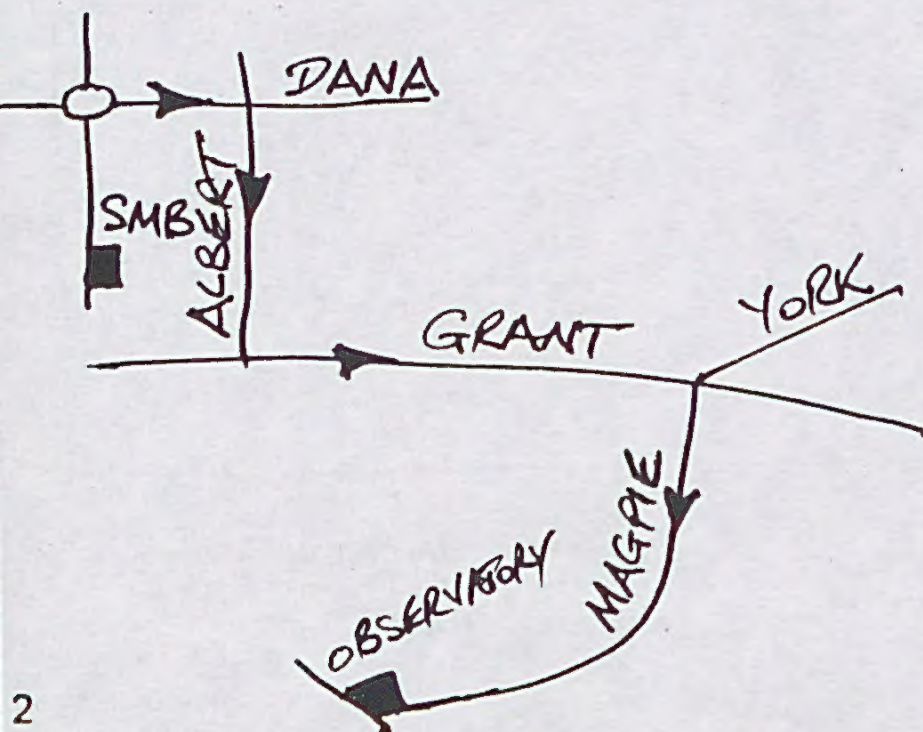
Friday July 7 : July meeting. Tony Dyson will give an illustrated talk on Astronomy at the July meeting. The talk will be followed by a guided tour of the Ballarat Observatory in Magpie St.

Due to time constraints, general business will be conducted at SMB at 7.30pm. The talk will finish at 8.30pm. and then we will move up to the observatory arriving before 9pm. There will be no supper at SMB (but we can get mugs of tea later at the observatory).

The observatory buildings and most of the telescopes are owned by the Ballarat City Council with the Ballarat Astronomical Society (BAS) acting as caretakers, and a charge of \$2 per head is made by BAS for group tours.

Weather permitting, observations will be made using the historic Oddie 8" reflecting telescope. Be prepared for the conditions by wearing warm clothing, including gloves and headgear. Even with inclement weather there is still much to see at the observatory including the buildings, the stained glass windows, three telescopes, astro-computing and historic photographs.

The map shows the route that we will take to the observatory.



Mt Mercer and Dereel Bushland
1995

Sunday 7th May,

We journeyed south of Buninyong for 20 kilometres to Bob and Ailsa Wyllie's property which includes the summit and crater of Mt Mercer. Our group piled into Bob's 4wd utility and, followed by Ken McDonnell, were driven to the top of the mount. From the 428 metre summit we had a superb 360 degree view but some distant landmarks were obscured by cloud. Bob explained the history of the property and some of his interesting plans for future development. He plans to fence off the swampy area at the bottom of the crater, plant Oaks and restrict cattle grazing. Saucer sized mushrooms were growing in large rings; we quickly filled bags and boxes.

We then drove westward to the Colac road at the south end of Enfield Forest. Overhead were a pair of Peregrine Falcons which put on a display of flight and sound. A Scarlet Robin was clearly visible among the burnt roadside vegetation.

After lunch we strolled around the Dereel Bushland reserve. This is an open forest area. The main trees are Rough-barked Manna Gum and Narrow-leaf Peppermint with Swamp gum along the creek at the southern boundary. Mullock heaps and mine shafts showed that the reserve had been extensively mined. Many pairs of eyes quickly spotted autumn flowering orchids. We saw Tiny Greenhood *Pterostylis parviflora*, Small Mosquito Orchid *Acianthus pusillus* and Parson's Bands *Eriochilus cucullatus*. (I have included the latest botanical names from the "Flora of Victoria".)

The open areas allowed easy observation of birds which included Blue Wren, Yellow Robin, Jacky Winter, White-naped, White-cheeked and Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Crimson Rosella, Galah, Kookaburra, Grey Fantail, Eastern Spinebill and Golden Whistler.

At Dereel lagoon we met a local resident who invited us to his house. He showed us some birds which had been "painted" by sticking feathers onto a background. The birds were identified as several types of European birds.

On our return to Ballarat we drove along Misery Creek Road to Surface Point. This area had been burnt by the very hot fire in February. Grass trees, goodenia, blue pincushion and grasses are sprouting. At the edge of the track we were shown Bearded Midge Orchid *Genoplesium morrisii*.

Thanks to Pat and Bill Murphy for leading the excursion. Once again they showed us new areas close to home.

JG

Humpback Whales and Fraser Island

Dr Frank Harrap

Frank began his talk by explaining the travels of the humpback whales. The whales were observed between Fraser Island and the mainland. They were returning to Antarctic waters after calving in the warmer waters off the Queensland coast. Humpbacks are baleen whales which weigh up to 45 tonnes. They feed on krill around Antarctica so the whales seen at Fraser Island have not eaten for several months. Frank's excellent video showed many aspects of whale behaviour as they swam close to the surface to breath, and heads, flippers, tails and humpbacks broke out of the water. The Humpback is the fifth large whale species which Frank has seen in various oceans around the world.

Fraser Island is the world's largest sand island (184,000 hectares) with a length of 120km and a maximum width of 25km. It was formed 800,000 years ago. On the island are a diverse range of habitats including heathland, swamps, rain forest and perched lakes. Some of the dunes are mobile and bury vegetation in their paths. Aboriginal tools found in sand blows are made from rocks on the west side of the island. The lakes vary in ecology. The water is slightly acidic with pH ranging from 4.3 to 4.8. The more acidic lakes have brown, tannin stained water. Some lakes contain fish which attract Little Pied Cormorants and Pelicans.

There is a good range of animals found on the island. Of the twenty four mammals species the most numerous are 200-300 dingoes and about 100 brumbies. There are 36 reptile species. We were shown a Lace Monitor about 3 metres long and a Carpet Snake. There are also amphibians such as the Green Tree Frog.

Many birds are found on the island, 200 species have been recorded. Frank's video included an Ospreys nest where the male and female bird were tending a single egg. The sight and sound of many other birds were captured on video. These included whipbird, drongo, Caspian tern and lorikeets.

At Sandy Cape, on the north end of the island, is a lighthouse built in 1870. The tracks to reach it are rugged.

The coastline is the site of many shipwrecks. The wreck of the Maheno is clearly visible. The ship had been used as a hospital ship during World War 1 and ran aground in 1935 while being towed to Japan for scrap. At other places along the east coast are sands of many colours. The creeks flowing out of the dunes carry large quantities of fresh water to the sea.

The forests of Fraser Island have been logged. Satinay is one of the trees logged to provide timber for jetties and wharves. The rain forest areas contain trees up to 60 metres and an understorey of Lilly Pilly, Picabeen Palm, climbers and ferns.

Frank enjoyed and recommended the guided camping trip to Fraser Island. We thank Frank for his informative talk which was well illustrated by videotape.

Rubbish Bins



(From an article in *Geo Australasia*, May/June 1995)

Garbage bins were declared extinct in several ACT parks in the early nineties. Overwhelmed by rubbish being carried into the Narnadgi National Park and the Tidinbilla Nature Reserve in particular, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service decided to remove the bins.

One of the rangers, Brett MacNamara is quoted as saying, "now we have nowhere the problem that we had previously - and often with the help of wildlife, which would pick out food scraps and cause rubbish to blow everywhere. Bins seemed to create a mess and we were spending far too much time cleaning it up"

The article says the idea of removing bins from conservation areas is often discussed by rangers but making the decision to implement such schemes has been less popular for fear that park visitors will dump their garbage anywhere.

In the ACT the bins were removed as a cost-cutting measure to limit the creation of rubbish, minimise danger to wildlife and to encourage recycling. Apparently in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve there were over 30 garbage bins accumulating up to 125 kilograms of rubbish every week. Collecting and transporting the refuse to appropriate facilities in Canberra tied up parks staff and their vehicles for one day each week.

The authorities believe two factors have contributed to the success of the programme. There has been a continuous public relations campaign which began as soon as the bins disappeared; and the ACT population have always responded well to recycling ideas.



**Looking for the bins?
You brought them with you!**

Plastic bags, cardboard boxes and even eskies make very good temporary garbage bins. Did you know, you can recycle much of your rubbish? Call into the visitor centre for more information.



ACT Parks and Conservation Service

In both parks, which together receive hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, low profile signs have been erected in place of bins. In a lighthearted way these explain why bins are absent, ask visitors to take their rubbish home and encourage recycling. More detailed information about the scheme and recycling is available from the park visitor centres.

Mr MacNamara comments, " Today's visitors leave the park much more rubbish concious. They take their rubbish home and they are prompted to think even more about recycling so there are definite spin-off effects. However if we had tried this 10 years ago, before the recycling ethos had emerged, I think both of the parks would have become tips".

Mr MacNamara published an article on the subject in *Ranger*, which is a journal for conservation managers and produced by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency.

There was great response and enthusiasm shown by his colleagues and it seems the ACT Service has indeed been of great service.

White - Striped Mastiff Bat

Tadarida australis

Order - Chiroptera Sub Order - Microchiroptera

Family - Molossidae

The grotesque, savage appearance of this bat belies its nature for it is very docile. It occupies a diverse range of habitats but it is not found in the tropics. It occasionally comes to ground to hunt terrestrial insects but it usually forages for insects in the Redgums along creeks and rivers.

It has long narrow wings for fast flight but has difficulty in launching itself as the wings provide little uplift.

Small groups of 10 or so are found in tree hollows; individual bats may be found under loose bark, in tree stumps and in house roofs.

The White-Striped Mastiff Bat is common to uncommon in its widespread habitat. There are two sub-species.

Elfin



White - Striped Mastiff Bat

Little Mastiff Bat

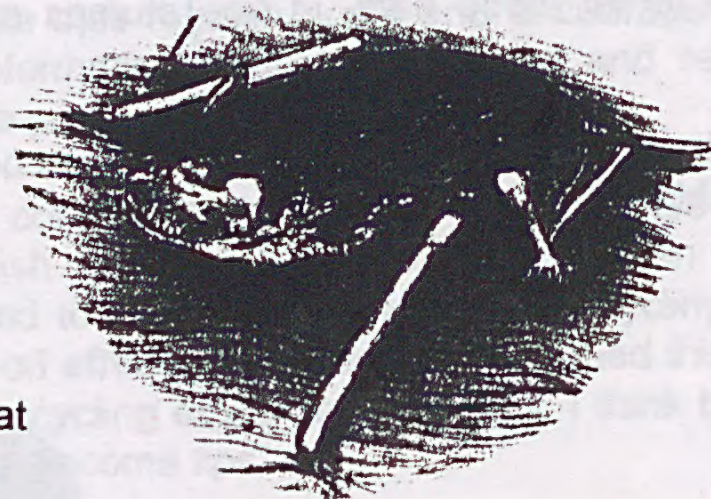
Mormopterus planiceps

This very small bat has a very flat head and body - in fact a group of 7 have been found in a Casuarina tree and entered through a hole no bigger than a mans' thumb. The flight is swift but with little manoeuvreability. It is quite gentle to handle but can be aggressive towards other bats. Colonies sometimes include other species - in spite of this tendency to be aggressive. There can be from 10 to 100 bats in a roost.

It is quite common in a widespread habitat.

There are no sub-species.

Elfin



Little Mastiff Bat

